



Conservation on Louisiana's Private Lands

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A report by the USDA Natural Resources
Conservation Service
in cooperation with local Soil and Water
Conservation Districts and
Resource Conservation and Development
Councils



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From the State Conservationist:

Caring for our natural resources continues to be primarily in the hands of our private landowners because over 90 percent of America's land is privately owned. These partners, clients and friends continue to take these stewardship duties very seriously, making a difference in enhancing and protecting our environment. Through the help of soil and water conservation districts and many other essential partners, private landowners are installing needed soil and water conservation practices for the good of the people of this state and nation.

Technical assistance to install the conservation practices is needed and welcomed by private landowners--the primary customers of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Through various Farm Bill programs and other related work, private landowners are making a difference on the land. Healthy soil and clean water are essential to a productive state and nation.

Donald W. Gohmert
State Conservationist

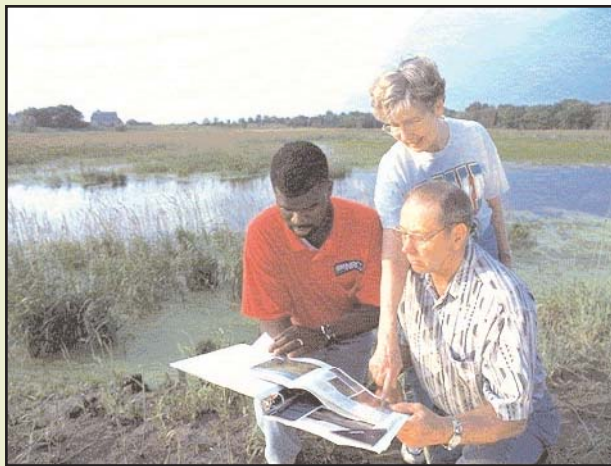


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Conservation Operations

The Natural Resources Conservation Service is the agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture that works directly with farmers, ranchers, landowners and others to install conservation practices that help protect our natural resources.



NRCS focuses its assistance on non-federal land. Landusers request help from NRCS through the 44 soil and water conservation districts covering all of the 64 parishes in the state.

Helping people develop conservation plans that protect their soil and water resources, enhance the productivity and sustainability of the land while ensuring the potential for long-term profitability, is at the heart and spirit of NRCS's service.

The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002



The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, the new Farm Bill, has ten titles or sections. **Conservation** is *Title II*. The conservation title of this new Farm Bill is landmark legislation for conservation funding and for focusing on stewardship issues. The conservation provisions are assisting farmers and ranchers in meeting the environmental challenges on their lands. The legislation simplifies existing programs and creates new programs to address high priority conservation and production goals. The 2002 Farm Bill enhances the long-term quality of our environment and conservation of our natural resources.

The conservation provisions support the production of a reliable, safe, and affordable supply of food and fiber; promote stewardship of agricultural land and water resources; and ensure continued economic development and research.



Environmental Quality Incentives Program

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is reauthorized in the 2002 Farm Bill. It is a voluntary USDA conservation program for farmers and ranchers to treat identified soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on eligible land. It provides technical and financial assistance to eligible agricultural producers.

Since 1996, thousands of Louisiana landowners have made an investment in conserving Louisiana's natural resources through **EQIP**.



Environmental Quality Incentives Program Fiscal Year 2004


Congressional District	2004 Number of Contracts Funded	2004 Contract Acres	2004 Contract Amounts
1	50	2,756	\$301,324
2			
3	90	17,046	\$287,620
4	190	12,973	\$1,812,705
5	516	60,105	\$5,836,232
6	108	13,871	\$554,577
7	517	59,326	\$4,087,242
Totals	1,471	166,078	\$12,879,700



EQIP 1998 - 2004

Number of Contracts Funded-----	6,665
Number of Acres-----	641,691
Dollars Obligated-----	\$26,727,780

Wetlands Reserve Program



The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is the nation's premier wetlands restoration program. It is a voluntary program offering landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on their properties.



The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service manages WRP and provides technical and financial support to help landowners who participate in the program. WRP offers landowners three options:

- **Permanent Easements** - Landowners are offered fair market agricultural value for their eligible lands and NRCS pays 100 percent of the restoration costs. Land payments may be lump sum.
- **30-year Easements** - Landowners are offered 75 percent of the fair market agricultural value of their lands, and NRCS pays 75 percent of the restoration costs.
- **Restoration Cost-share Agreements** - NRCS pays 75 percent of the restoration costs and agreements are established for a minimum of 10 years.

There are over 200,000 acres of land enrolled in the Wetlands Reserve Program in Louisiana.

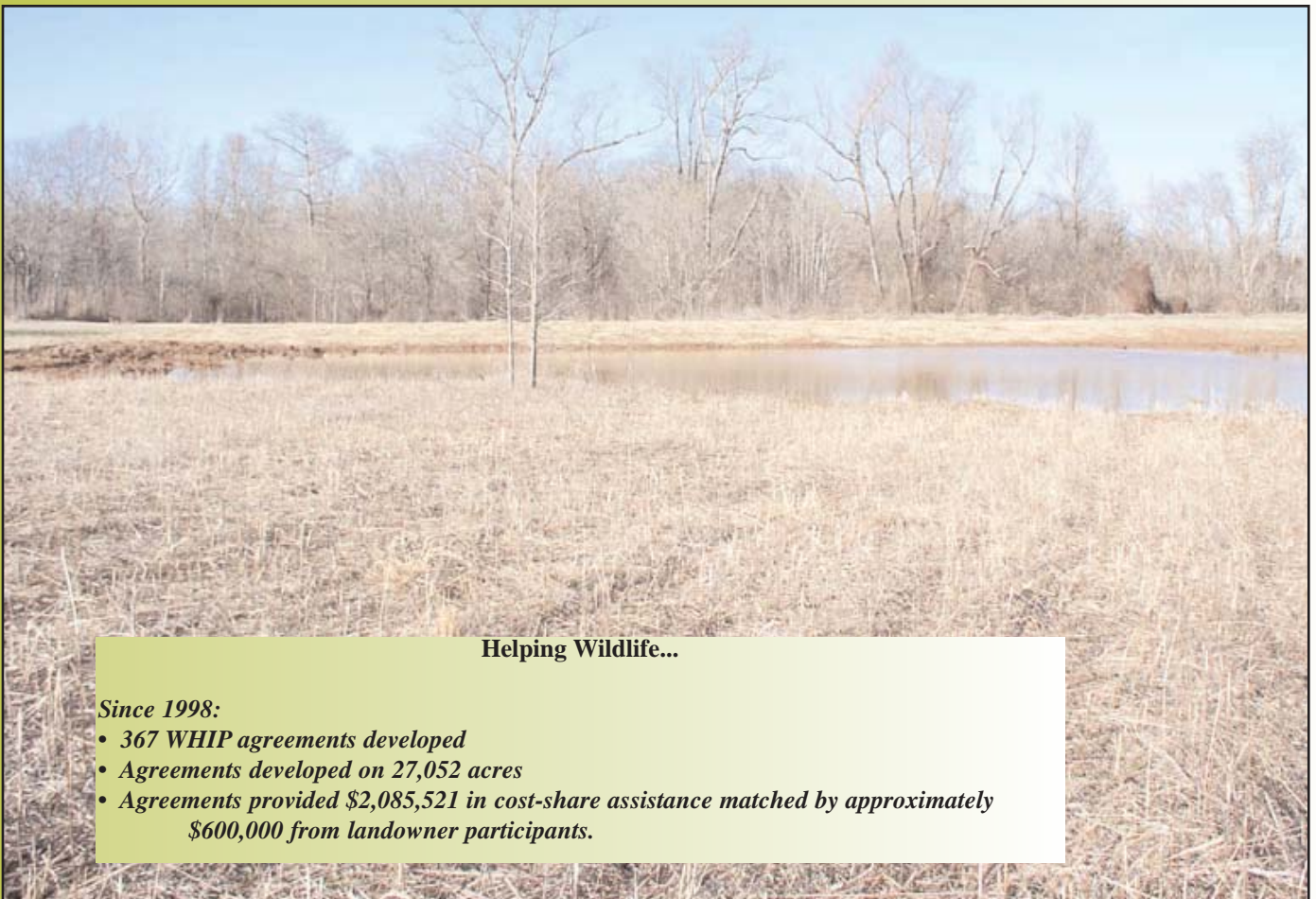
During 2004, NRCS offered to purchase easements on another 15,613 acres for 41 additional contracts.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

The **Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)** is a voluntary program for people who want to develop and improve wildlife habitat on their private lands. **WHIP** provides both technical assistance and cost-share payments to establish and improve fish and wildlife habitats.

Practices installed under the **WHIP** include:

- *Dikes* to hold water for wildlife, especially migratory waterfowl and shorebirds.
- *Prescribed Burning* uses fire as a management tool to establish and maintain highly desirable food and cover plants for wildlife.
- *Tree Establishment* to help grow more trees for wildlife; longleaf pine ecosystems are a priority.
- *Structures for Water Control* to provide water during the most critical periods of the year. Water may be removed to promote the establishment and growth of food and cover plants.
- *Shallow Water Management for Wildlife* uses management tools such as disking to encourage the establishment and growth of important wildlife plants.
- *Brush Management* to remove invasive species of brush that have no wildlife benefits.



Helping Wildlife...

Since 1998:

- *367 WHIP agreements developed*
- *Agreements developed on 27,052 acres*
- *Agreements provided \$2,085,521 in cost-share assistance matched by approximately \$600,000 from landowner participants.*

Conservation Reserve Program

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is administered by the USDA Farm Service Agency. The program offers annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to farmers to establish long-term conserving covers like grass and trees on eligible land. Contracts are for a minimum of 10 years and a maximum of 15 years.

CRP requires a balance among conservation purposes for soil erosion control, water quality protection, and wildlife habitat. **CRP** technical assistance is provided by NRCS.

**Through 29 CRP Sign-ups,
Louisiana has:**

- 3,648 active CRP contracts.
- 250,007 total CRP acres.
- Annual rental payments in excess of \$9 million.



Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention

A watershed is the land that water flows across or under on its way to a bayou, lake, stream, river, gulf, or ocean.

NRCS administers watershed projects under Public Law 83-566, the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act of 1954. These projects help urban and rural communities protect, improve, and develop the water and land resources of watersheds up to 250,000 acres. Public Law 83-566 projects can be multipurpose.

NRCS watershed projects provide:

- **drainage**
- **flood control**
- **irrigation water**
- **conservation benefits**
- **land treatment benefits**
- **added recreational benefits**



Construction of concrete-lined channels in the Bayou Bourbeaux Watershed, Opelousas, La., will help eliminate or reduce flooding in the area.

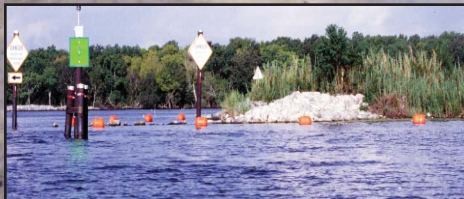
Louisiana has 83 outstanding long-term contracts for the watersheds of Middle Tangipahoa, Central Richland, Bayou Bourbeaux and Bayou Duralde-Lower Nezpique.

The Breaux Act

Public Law 101-646



The coastal wetlands and estuaries of Louisiana are one of the world's great ecosystems. For millenia, the Mississippi River has supplied the coast with an immense resource of fresh water, nutrients and sediment that built a vast expanse of marshes. In the last several decades, however, humans have impacted the ecosystem in many ways. About 25 square miles of coastal wetlands are lost each year. In November 1990, Congress passed and President Bush signed *Public Law 101-646, the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA)*. Senator John Breaux was the author of this bill that is now commonly referred to as the *Breaux Act*. The *Breaux Act* provided a national mandate to help save Louisiana's coastal wetlands. The Act directed that a task force consisting of five federal agencies and the state of Louisiana develop a "comprehensive approach to restore and prevent the loss of coastal wetlands in Louisiana." The *Breaux Act* authorized the construction of wetland protection and restoration projects through the development of Priority Project Lists submitted to Congress annually.



CWPPRA has been re-authorized until 2019.

Completed Breaux Act projects with NRCS as the federal sponsor and the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources as the state sponsor:

Cheniere Au Tigre
Jonathan Davis--Construction Unit 1,2,3
Naomi Outfall
Sweet Lake/Willow Lake
Oaks-Avery
Perry Ridge West
West Hackberry Planting Demonstration
Dewitt Rollover Planting Demonstration
Falgout Canal Vegetation Demonstration
Timbalier Island Vegetation Demonstration
Boston Canal
Highway 384
Holly Beach
Southwest Shore of White Lake Demonstration
East Mud Lake
Freshwater Bayou
Cameron Creole Maintenance
Freshwater Bayou Bank Stabilization
Raccoon Island Demonstration
Perry Ridge/GIWW Bank Protection (Incre. 1)
Brady Canal
Thin-Mat Enhancement Demonstration
Plowed Terraces Demonstration
GIWW to Clovelly (revised)
Barataria Bay Waterway/West
Fritchie Marsh
Barataria Bay Waterway/East
Barataria Basin Landbridge--Const. Unit 1 and 2
Cote Blanche Hydrologic Restoration
Caernarvon Outfall
Management
Lake Portage



Plant Materials Program

Many of today's environmental problems can be addressed effectively through the use of plants. The NRCS Plant Materials Program focuses on using native plants as a natural way to solve conservation problems and protect ecosystems.

The NRCS Plant Materials Center located in Galliano, Louisiana:

- *Develops improved plants that will persist in a changing coastal marsh environment.*
- *Develops cultural techniques for the successful use of improved plant materials (sand fencing and transplanting).*
- *Releases and provides for the commercial production of improved plant materials for a wetland plant nursery industry in Louisiana.*
- *Develops and transfers effective plant science technology that addresses critical wetland conservation needs. Planting guides and standards are developed and shared with all coastal wetland restoration agencies.*
- *Promotes the use of tested and proven plant materials to solve coastal wetland conservation problems.*
- *Serves as a statewide learning center to stimulate and foster an understanding of the importance of plants and plant technology in controlling coastal erosion and marsh restoration.*
- *Cooperates with many partners including the LSU Ag Center to expand the technology of developing and utilizing native plants in coastal wetland restoration.*



Soil Survey and Soil Services



Through a joint effort with state agricultural experiment stations, local soil and water conservation districts, and other federal, state, and local agencies and groups, NRCS conducts soil surveys and distributes the information in various formats.

Soil surveys are not soil samples or soil tests, although they use both. Soil surveys are detailed reports that contain comprehensive narrative information, interpretive tables, and soil maps. Soil survey reports are generally released for individual parishes (counties). Each soil in an area is described, in detail, as to its physical and chemical properties such as color, texture, structure, consistency, reaction (pH), cation exchange capacity, bulk density, and presence of a water table or toxic salts. Each report lists names and classification of soils based on a nation-wide system and provides information on the potential and limitations of the soils for various uses.

* Much of this information is available at the NRCS - Soils website at; <http://soils.usda.gov>

Acadia #,**	East Feliciana	Natchitoches	St. Tammany
Allen	Evangeline	Orleans #	Claibore
Ascension #	East Carroll	Ouachita	Tangipahoa
Assumption #	Franklin	Plaquemines	Tensas **
Avoyelles	Grant	Pointe Coupee *	Terrebonne #, **
Beauregard	Iberia	Rapides	Union
Bienville	Iberville #	Red River	Vermilion
Bossier *	Jackson	Richland	Vernon
Caddo *	Jefferson #	Sabine	Washington
Calcasieu #	Jefferson Davis #	St. Bernard #	Wbster
Caldwell	Lafayette #	St. Charles #	West Baton Rouge #
Cameron	LaFourche #	St. Helena	West Carroll
Catahoula	LaSalle	St. James *	West Feliciana
Concordia	Lincoln #	St. John *	Winn
DeSoto	Livingston	St. Landry #	
East Baton Rouge *	Madison	St. Martin #	
East Carroll	Morehouse	St. Mary #, **	

Initial Soil Survey Complete - Publication Available - Hard Copy

Initial Soil Survey Complete - Publication Available - CD-ROM

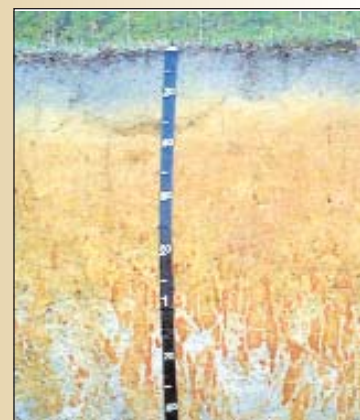
Initial Soil Survey Complete - Publication Available - HC & CD

Initial Soil Survey Complete - Publication Not Available

* Update in progress - publication not available

**Update complete - publication not available

Digital Soil Maps Available



The Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative

The Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) is a voluntary effort to enhance private grazing lands through NRCS technical assistance. It is a nationwide partnership. Many people and groups understand how grazing lands contribute to a healthy environment and economy and they are taking action to ensure that the 525 million acres of privately owned grazing lands receive the important attention needed. GLCI is a compatible, coordinated effort to identify priority issues, find solutions and effect change on private grazing lands.

Grazing lands make up almost one-half of the non-federal land of the United States.

- *America's private grazing lands provide habitat to two-thirds of our wildlife, water for urban and other users, and visually appealing open space.*
- *Properly managed grazing lands provide food for grazing animals that convert it to food (meat and milk) for human consumption.*
- *Grazing lands provide recreational opportunities.*
- *Healthy grazing lands mean less erosion and cleaner water.*
- *Products from grazing lands are sold throughout the world.*
- *More carbon sequestered on one acre of grasslands than one acre of forests.*

In Fiscal Year 2004, NRCS personnel and partners:

- *Provided training on grazing lands at events lasting one day or more to 120 agency personnel and landowners.*
- *Provided information on grazing lands and its management to over 2,400 people!*
- *Provided assistance in the development of a statewide Master Cattle Producer Program to help cattle producers gain a working knowledge of environmental stewardship and implement sustainable livestock production practices on their farms.*



Resource Conservation and Development

The Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Program, approved by Congress in 1962, is designed to speed up resource development and environmental protection in multi-parish and multi-county areas. RC&D areas are led by grassroots councils made up of community leaders and local officials that help provide practical solutions for land and resource conservation, environmental enhancement, water management and community development.

RC&D projects reduce soil erosion, improve water quality, enhance wildlife habitat, create jobs and businesses, protect heritage sites and improve sewer treatment.

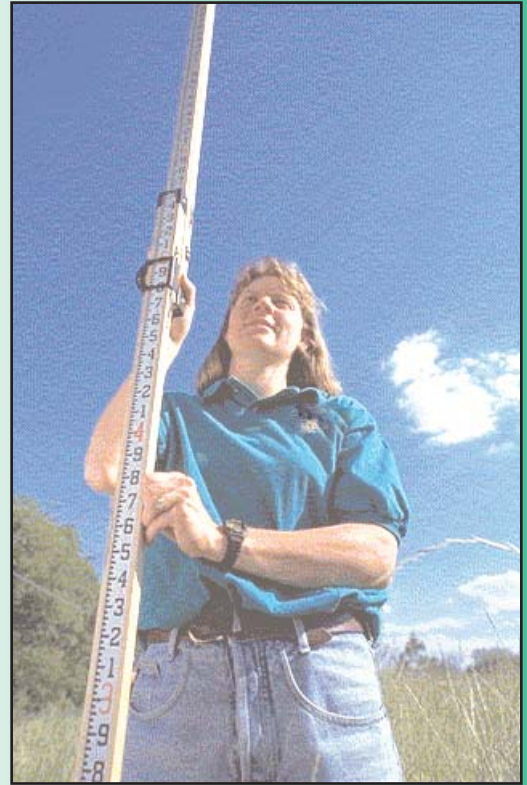


Soil and Water Conservation Districts



Louisiana has 44 local soil and water conservation districts. Soil and water conservation districts are legal subdivisions of state government that coordinate and help administer natural resource conservation programs within their respective boundaries. Conservation districts help promote soil and water conservation work at the local level in every part of the state by being involved in conservation efforts and programs and helping to sponsor many projects. Soil and water conservation districts help promote conservation work within their boundaries.

Soil and water conservation districts and the Soil Conservation Service, now the Natural Resources Conservation Service, were born from the Dust Bowl days of the 1930's. The Dust Bowl was a natural resource disaster that took place in the Great Plains region of the United States in the 1930's. As droughts killed all the plants on farms and as the land dried up, great clouds of dust and sand, carried by the wind, covered almost everything. The need for a national soil conservation program became very evident. The Dust Bowl lasted about a decade, but it generated a conservation ethic that will last for generations to come.



Conservation Security Program

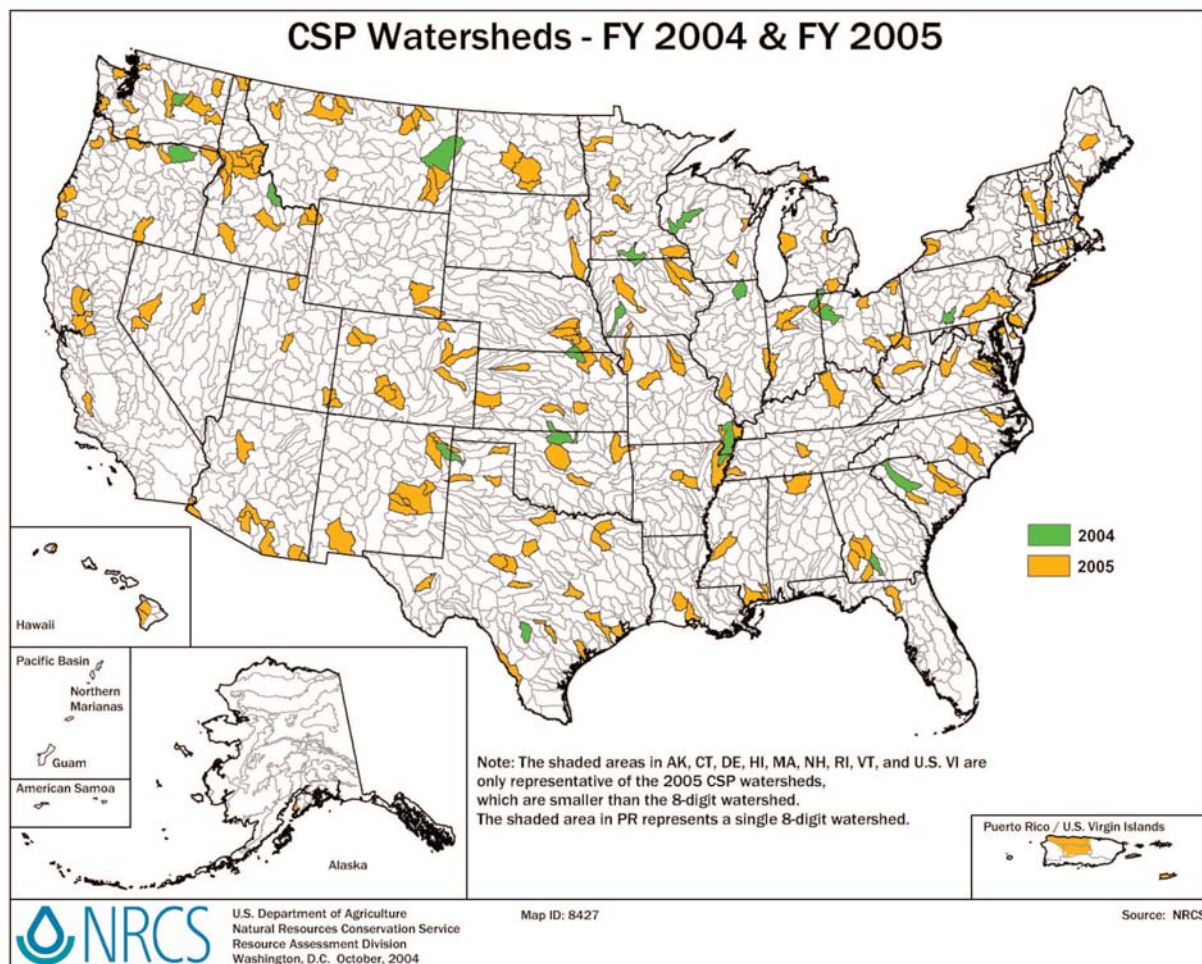
The Conservation Security Program (CSP) is a voluntary program that supports ongoing stewardship of private agricultural lands by providing payments for maintaining and enhancing natural resources. CSP identifies and rewards those farmers and cattle producers who are meeting the highest standards of conservation and environmental management on their operations in selected watersheds.

CSP sign-ups are only offered in selected priority watersheds across the nation.

Producers must complete a self-assessment to determine eligibility

Eligible producers within the watersheds submit an application for the program

Based on the application, description of conservation activities and a follow-up interview, NRCS will determine which program tier and enrollment category are available for the applicant.



The Earth Team

The **Earth Team** is the volunteer segment or program of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

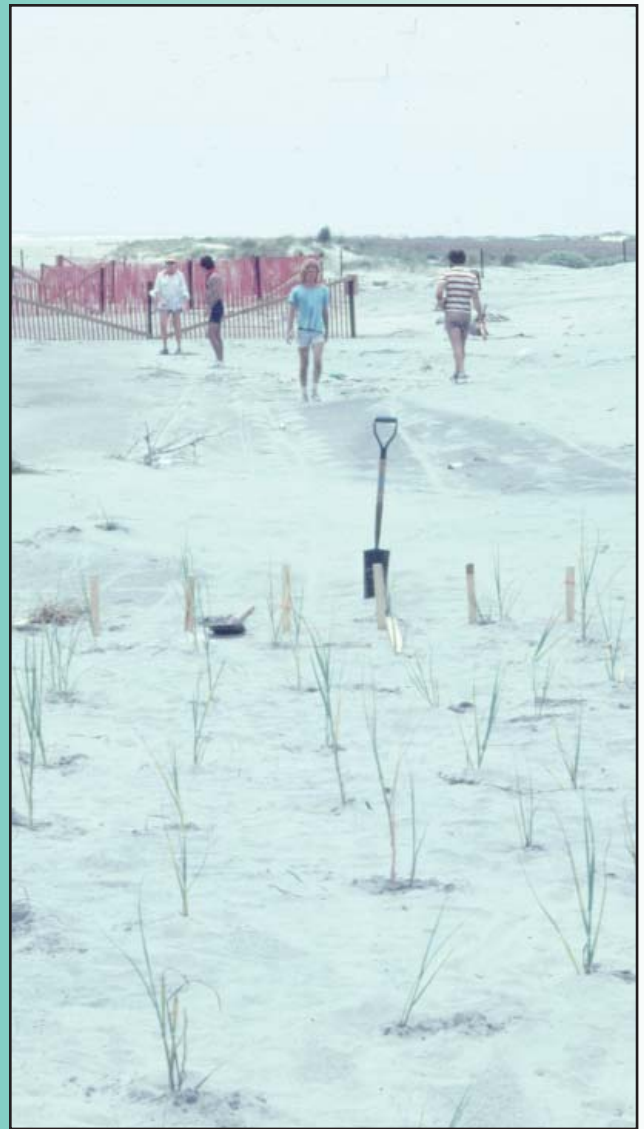
During the past year, 1,100 volunteers donated 32,526 hours of time in Louisiana!

Earth Day celebrations involving **Earth Team** volunteers held throughout Louisiana with hundreds of children and young adults participating in the partnership events.

At Holly Beach in Cameron Parish, a large group of **Earth Team** volunteers planted woody species and grasses along the beach area. The vegetation will provide shelter and food for migrant birds during migration periods. The grasses will reduce erosion of sand dunes on Holly Beach. NRCS provided the plant materials and direction for planting a successful wind and water barrier. Over 1000 plants were planted within 1 ½ hour timeframe.

Each year the Many NRCS office and Sabine Soil and Water Conservation District hold a Big Bream Challenge. This year's event tied into the Earth Day theme and celebration. During the fishing activity, information is provided on conservation of our natural resources, soil stewardship, enhancing wildlife habitat and aquatic life identification.

In Alexandria, NRCS and Rapides Soil and Water Conservation District personnel participate annually with other environmental groups at the zoo.



The Fast Food Farm, about 30 miles south of Baton Rouge, helps kids learn about food production. Personnel from the New River Soil and Water Conservation District and volunteers have

been instrumental in developing this special learning area that helps kids connect to agriculture and the origin of their favorite fast foods.



NRCS Office Directory

Field Office	Telephone Number	Field Office	Telephone Number
Abbeville	(337) 893-5664 Ext. 3	Lake Providence	(318) 559-2604 Ext. 3
Addis	(225) 687-2184 Ext. 3	Leesville	(337) 239-2193 Ext. 3
Alexandria	(318) 473-7856 Ext. 3	Mansfield	(318) 872-4949 Ext. 3
Amite	(985) 748-8751 Ext. 3	Many	(318) 256-3491
Bastrop	(318) 283-7626 Ext. 3	Marksville	(318) 253-9445 Ext. 3
Benton	(318) 965-2185 Ext. 3	Minden	(318) 377-3950 Ext.3
Clinton	(225) 683-5496 Ext. 3	Monroe	(318) 343-4467 Ext. 3
Colfax	(318) 627-9903 Ext. 3	Natchitoches	(318) 357-8366 Ext. 3
Columbia	(318) 649-2651 Ext. 3	New Iberia	(337) 369-6623 Ext. 3
Coushatta	(318) 932-4352 Ext. 3	New Orleans	(985) 758-2162
Crowley	(337) 783-1257 Ext. 3	New Roads	(225) 638-7746 Ext. 3
Denham Springs	(225) 664-1430 Ext. 3	Oak Grove	(318) 428-9303 Ext. 3
DeRidder	(337) 463-8555 Ext. 3	Oberlin	(337) 639-4850 Ext. 3
Donaldsonville	(225) 473-7638 Ext. 3	Opelousas	(337) 942-2530 Ext. 3
Farmerville	(318) 368-8021	Rayville	(318)728-4451 Ext. 3
Ferriday	(318) 757-2455 Ext. 3	Ruston	(318) 255-3136 Ext. 3
Franklin	(337) 828-1461 Ext. 3	Shreveport	(318) 676 3333 Ext. 3
Franklinton	(985) 839-5688 Ext. 3	St. Joseph	(318)766-3502 Ext. 3
Jennings	(337) 824-0975 Ext. 3	Tallulah	(318) 574-4158 Ext. 3
Jonesville	(318) 339-4239 Ext. 3	Thibodaux	(985) 447-3871 Ext. 3
Lafayette	(337) 262-6601 Ext. 3	Ville Platte	(337) 363-6602 Ext. 3
Lake Charles	(337) 436-5020 Ext. 3	Winnsboro	(318) 435-6743 Ext. 3

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